CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 23 NOVEMBER 2000 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF A STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION DATED 19 NOVEMBER 2000 ON THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE TREATY ON CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES IN EUROPE

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement by the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vladimir Putin, on the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

I should be grateful if the statement could be issued as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distributed to the delegations of all member States of the Conference and non-member States participating in its work.

(Signed): Vasily SIDOROV
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Head of delegation of the Russian Federation
to the Conference on Disarmament

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Statement by the President of the Russian Federation

19 November marks the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, a document which plays a key role in strengthening European security.

For the first time in history, an effective control regime for conventional weapons has been established to cover the entire continent, and an unprecedented degree of openness has been achieved in the military sphere. The Treaty has made it possible to carry out a rapid and balanced reduction in a large quantity of surplus armaments and equipment, which came into the possession of the States parties as a legacy of the cold war period. It has helped us to survive without upheaval the epoch-making changes which have taken place in the military and political landscape of Europe over the past decade.

It may be said without exaggeration that throughout these past 10 years, threats to the very existence of the Treaty have been ever-present. They are still with us today. It is important that the States parties should continue to demonstrate their concern to preserve the regime of controls on conventional weapons, and should not put it to any dangerous tests. I have in mind attempts to undermine stability in the area of nuclear weapons, an ill-considered bloc-oriented policy, the use of force in circumvention of the Security Council or other acts which go against the security interests of the partners in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

If due account is taken of these interests, the parties to the Treaty can find a way out of the most difficult situations. One of the most recent examples is the events in Chechnya. The Russian Federation greatly appreciates the understanding with which the forced measures that we took to counteract large-scale terrorist aggression, leading to the flank limitations being temporarily exceeded, have been met.

Unfortunately, the situation in the Northern Caucasus is still complex. In these circumstances, taking account of the obligations assumed a year ago, we are doing everything possible to secure maximum transparency in our actions to defend the State interests of the Russian Federation. In no sense are these actions intended to encroach upon the national security of the countries of the region; on the contrary, they are aimed at gradually reducing the quantity of armaments and equipment which are temporarily in the region and which fall under the Treaty limitations.

We confirm the Russian Federation's adherence to all the Treaty obligations, including the flank limitations, to which we will definitely return when the counter-terrorist operations have been completed.

In accordance with the bilateral agreements reached at Istanbul, and with the interested support of our partners under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the problems of withdrawing Russian forces from the territory of Georgia and the Dniester region are in the process of being solved.

I am certain that the early entry into force of the agreement on adapting the Treaty will strengthen its vitality and make it an effective instrument for ensuring the security of the continent in the twenty-first century. There are no reasons for dragging out the process of ratifying the adapted Treaty. This is our firm position. We are completing the preparations for submitting this document for ratification by the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. We have no doubt that the deputies will support it.

In a few weeks humanity will be entering the new millennium. I should like to wish all Treaty partners peace and concord, and to the Treaty itself many years of life, for the benefit of enhanced security in Europe.

Moscow, the Kremlin
19 November 2000